Introduction

Following the attacks of September 11, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, commonly called the 9/11 Commission, identified a number of information sharing failures and recommended a series of reforms to prevent such failures in the future.

Establishing an Information Sharing Environment 2004-2006

In response to 9/11 Commission recommendations, President George W. Bush issued several executive orders, including Executive Order 13356, "Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans," on August 27, 2004, which required the heads of departments and agencies to share terrorism information, mandating that "in the design and use of information systems . . . the highest priority" must be given to the "interchange of terrorism information among agencies."

Congress also responded to the 9/11 Commission, both by removing legal barriers and by establishing particular information sharing initiatives. In Section 1016 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA), the Congress established the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) which it defined as "an approach that facilitates the sharing of terrorism information, which may include any methods determined necessary and appropriate for carrying out this section." Section 1016 also established a Program Manager for the ISE, an Information Sharing Council, and mandated the issuance of guidelines to protect privacy and civil liberties.

Executive Order 13388, "Further Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans," (2005) replaced EO 13356 and reinforced the IRTPA approach, restating the imperative for agencies to share terrorism information with each other subject to the requirement to protect privacy and civil liberties.

The ISE adopted a distributed, decentralized model which, instead of relying on a central database of terrorism information, requires an ISE that connects existing systems, a model which enables cooperation across federal agencies and among state, local, tribal, private sector and international partners. This model also lessens the risks of privacy abuses, compromise, or data breaches.

2007-2010: EXPANDING THE INFORMATION SHARING PRIORITY

In 2007, the Congress enacted the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act ("9/11 Act"), a major update to IRTPA. In so doing, Congress indefinitely extended the term of the Program Manager for the ISE (which had previously been limited to two years), added homeland security and weapons of mass destruction information to the ISE's scope, and included several new ISE attributes for information sharing.

2010 – PRESENT: INCREASING INFORMATION SHARING AND SAFEGUARDING

The next major development in ISE history concerns safeguarding shared information. In 2010, the website WikiLeaks, in cooperation with leading newspapers, published a trove of secret diplomatic cables allegedly provided to WikiLeaks by U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning. This led some to question whether sharing had gone too far, endangering sources and methods.

Following a comprehensive interagency review, President Obama issued Executive Order 13587, "Structural Reforms to Improve Sharing and Safeguarding of Classified Information on Computer Networks," which established several new interagency bodies to coordinate efforts to improve security on classified networks, including a Senior Information Sharing and Safeguarding Steering Committee, an Insider Threat Task Force, and an Executive Agent for Safeguarding comprised of the National Security Agency and the Department of Defense.

THE FUTURE OF RESPONSIBLE INFORMATION SHARING

The Administration continues to advance responsible information sharing. As the director of the national office for responsible information sharing, the Program Manager and the White House are working together to:

- advance responsible information sharing to further the counterterrorism and homeland security missions
- lead a transformation from information ownership to information stewardship
- promote partnerships across federal, state, local and tribal governments, the private sector, and internationally